

HCV FUSION PROTEINS WITH MODIFIED NS3 DOMAIN

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

5 The invention provides HCV fusion proteins that include a mutated NS3 protease domain, fused to at least one other HCV epitope derived from another region of the HCV polyprotein. The fusions can be used in methods of stimulating a cellular immune response to HCV, such as activating hepatitis C virus (HCV)-specific T cells, including CD4⁺ and CD8⁺ T cells. The method can be used in model systems to develop

10 HCV-specific immunogenic compositions, as well as to immunize a mammal against HCV.